

Reviews.

A MANUAL OF DISEASES OF THE NERVOUS SYSTEM, By
W. R. Gowers, M. D., F. R. C. P. American Edition,
with 341 Illustrations. P. Blakiston, Son & Co., 1888.

From a small beginning a great work has gradually been evolved. Less than ten years ago Gowers put forth a very modest little book on the Diagnosis of diseases of the Spinal Cord, which was soon followed by an equally modest treatise on Diseases of the Brain. Two years ago the first half of this manual appeared, comprising Diseases of the Spinal Cord and Nerves, and now this manual of diseases of the entire nervous system is placed before us.

The present volume is an exceedingly clumsy one of 1357 pages, so voluminous indeed, that it is almost impossible to hold it in the hand for even a few minutes with any degree of comfort. Why the American publishers should have insisted on putting this vast amount of matter into a single volume, we cannot understand. To make matters worse, the typographical appearance of the book has suffered, the type is often blurred and the illustrations unnecessarily indistinct. Publishers should remember that students of a book such as Gowers', will not refrain from buying a work because it happens to appear in two volumes. With this protest we can pass on to the work itself.

The most conscientious reviewer cannot be expected to read 1357 pages of a manual from beginning to end, but he can put the book to a different yet satisfactory test. The present writer has had Gowers' manual at his elbow for the last six weeks, and during that time has made it his chief book of reference on matters neurological. During this time a very wide range of subjects has been consulted; among these were neuritis, locomotor ataxia, myelitis, acute infantile paralysis, cerebral hemorrhage, ataxic paraplegia, pseudo-hypertrophic paralysis, brain tumors, tetanus and neuralgias, and many more. The work has not been found wanting in any respect.

All these chapters have been written with unusual care. The author's wide clinical experience enables him to lend the charm of personal observation to the discussion of the most abstruse forms of nervous disease, while every earnest student will stand aghast at the author's wide reading of neurological literature. He has liberally consulted English, German and American articles, a little to the neglect, we think, of French writings.

Besides being a thorough clinician, Gowers is an admirable pathologist, and in no work on nervous diseases that we are acquainted with has the pathology of nervous diseases been so thoroughly discussed as here. Not quite so much can be said of Gowers' therapeutic suggestions; they are meager rather than otherwise. Yet it is questionable whether the author has not after all shown sound judgment in limiting himself to therapeutic measures of known value instead of entering upon the efficacy of this or that drug in this or that special little disease.

Gowers has followed in the footsteps of Strümpell and others in beginning his book with diseases of the peripheral nervous system, preceded by a general introduction on symptomatology; next in order come diseases of the spinal cord; then diseases of the brain, and lastly general and functional diseases of the entire central nervous system.

By way of introduction to diseases of the spinal cord and brain, Gowers gives excellent chapters on the anatomy and physiology of the cord and brain. These chapters are of a very high order of excellence, and as far as the brain is concerned no better and more concise description of its anatomy has been given in any English text-book. For the purpose of the student or clinician, all that he needs to know on this head, he will find lucidly stated in this chapter.

We are a little surprised that even Gowers should have slighted the anatomy of the peripheral nervous system. Every teacher of neurology will agree with the experience of the present writer that the average medical man knows just a little more (to be sure it is not much at that) of the anatomy of the spinal cord than he does, say, of the "make-up" of the brachial plexus. A few more good illustrations and a short descriptive account of the peripheral nerves would have added to the value of the first section of this book.

The discussion of the special diseases of each of the three large divisions of the nervous system is preceded by a chapter on the symptomatology of that division. The plan is a good one and well

executed, but it increases the number of cross-references. Thus, to get a complete idea of excessive knee-jerks, the student must seek this information in part in the chapter on symptomatology of diseases of the spinal cord, and in part in the chapter on primary spastic paraplegia. For the differential diagnosis of apoplexies, he must look up apoplexy and find a little but by no means as much as he had a right to expect under cerebral hemorrhage.

But we will not quibble with the author regarding the arrangement of his book. There is room for a difference of opinion on such points. The author has shown unusual discrimination and restraint in giving due consideration to each subject according to its merits; and not enlarging unduly upon subjects which the author had made special subjects of study, and yet his special studies tell in the admirable chapters on muscular paralysis, on optic nerve symptoms, and on spinal sclerosis. Functional nervous diseases are slighted just a little, and we are astounded that but one page out of 1357 should be devoted to neurasthenia. The author denies the justice of considering neurasthenia a clinical entity. This challenges the conviction of those of us who are thoroughly familiar with this *morbus Americanus*, and who know that there are cases of neurasthenia which are not merely cases of "neuralgia, headache, cephalic sensations, hysteria or hypochondriasis." It is surely as distinct a clinical conception as hysteria is.

Gowers' Manual is herewith recommended to the general and to the special student. It is not too detailed for the former, while for the specialist it is explicit enough as a first book of reference. It is, on the whole, an admirable treatise.

B. S.